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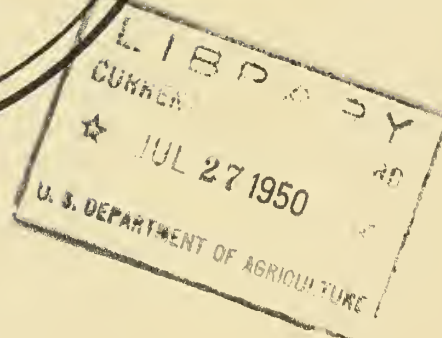


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# TALKS

**A guide  
to more  
effective  
speaking**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
... Office of Personnel ...  
... Washington, D.C.**



## FOREWORD

Speaking in conferences, at staff meetings, and before groups of farmers is a frequently occurring job of technicians and supervisors. This pamphlet contains a few simple suggestions which will help us do a better job. A well prepared and well presented talk before groups will often save hours of individual work. Thus, we save time and increase our efficiency. It is to this end that we make this self-training device available to you.

*Charles F Brannan*

Secretary

## OUTLINE

### HOW TO PREPARE A TALK

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Learn about program on which you are to appear.	
What does the Program Committee hope to accomplish?	
How much time? When? Where? Who?	
Will there be a discussion or question period?	
Have a specific purpose in mind.	

STEP II -- PREPARE YOUR PLAN - - - - -	2
Have three-part plan - introduction, body, conclusion.	
Construct body of speech first, introduction second, conclusion third.	
Build speech around carefully selected key points in proper sequence.	
Summarize notes on 3x5 card.	
Use appropriate visual aids.	
Aim plan toward objectives.	

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Use notes sparingly -- do not memorize.	
Keep audience and objective in mind as you practice.	
Be optimistic.	
Practice builds confidence.	

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Be calm -- relax physically and mentally.	
Speak naturally.	
Speak <u>to</u> listeners and not <u>at</u> them.	
Use your plan - don't ramble.	
Remember, HOW you speak is as important as WHAT you say.	

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"Will it help me do my job?"	
Did you attain your objective?	
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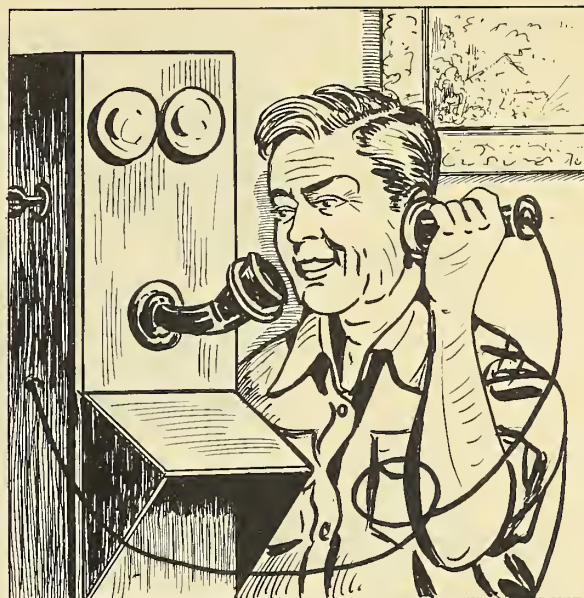


# HOW TO PREPARE A TALK

## STEP 1. GET THE SITUATION STRAIGHT

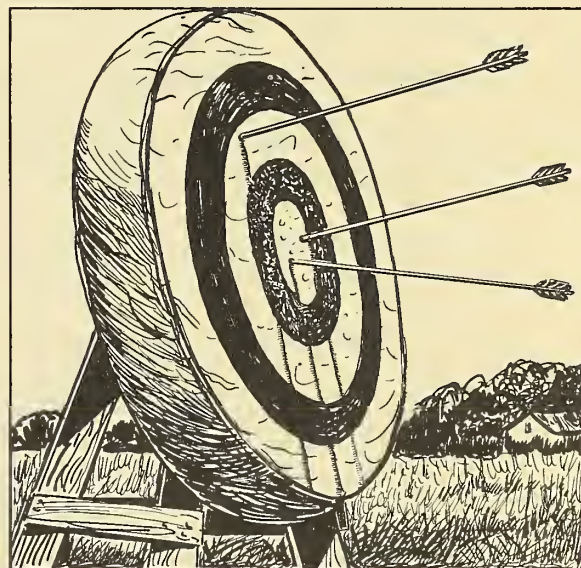
A. ASK QUESTIONS of the person who invites you to talk. A clear understanding of the situation in which you are to talk is the basis for preparing and delivering a good talk. Otherwise one might entirely miss the interest and needs of the group. A speaker who does not understand the situation may be in the position of a marksman shooting at the wrong target.

How many people will attend? What vocational fields are they from? What are their primary interests regarding the agricultural program? What other activities will be on the program? How much time will you have? How is the room arranged? What time will the meeting start? On most invitations you will know many of the answers already. It is always a good idea, however, to be sure.



B. GIVE INFORMATION to the chairman or person arranging the meeting. The introduction given you is a factor in the total effectiveness of your talk. To do a good job of introducing you and your subject, the chairman must know something about both. These are a few facts that will help him: (1) Where you live; (2) pertinent experience; (3) county or area in which you operate; (4) the correct name and purpose of your agency. There are other items, many of which depend on the situation. If the chairman does not know these things, see that he has the opportunity to get them.

C. DECIDE ON YOUR PURPOSE. Keep your objective on the level of the group's interests and knowledge. Calculate their interest in the subject and set your objective to the point you feel your talk will expand their interests.



For example, an employee, in talking before a group of farmers might have as his purpose, "to get farmers to understand the provisions of the agency program and to help them select farm practices." Speaking on the same general subject to his civic club, he might broaden his purpose to "show how the program fits into the agricultural needs of the community."

## STEP II. PREPARE YOUR PLAN

A. HAVE THREE-PART PLAN. When you complete your outline, it should consist of three major parts:

### INTRODUCTION, BODY, AND CONCLUSION

In terms of time for the talk the following illustration shows approximately the percentage that is devoted to each:

INTRODUCTION	BODY	CONCLUSION
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Start the body first, then figure out the introduction, and conclusion later.

B. CONSTRUCT BODY OF SPEECH. Here you will block or arrange the subject matter into three or at most five major topics. Most authorities on speech recommend that a complete outline breakdown of each major topic be made. Each major topic should be supported by examples. Illustrations and personal experiences are a must in any talk. The order of arrangement and the way these are worded should be slanted towards the objective you have established. This will make for continuity and clearness of thought expression. Speech notes need to contain only key ideas for reminders to the speaker. For a talk before a local civic club, an employee might outline the body of the talk as follows:

#### Body of Talk:

Progress that has been made -- dairy, beef, field crops, land-use.

Planning of current county program -- farmers -- agriculturalists -- major emphasis and why.

Operation of program -- group or community action -- county association -- office services.

Kinds of practices -- examples (Point out on wall map).

Joe Ragen -- changed use of 50 acres to hay. Give value.

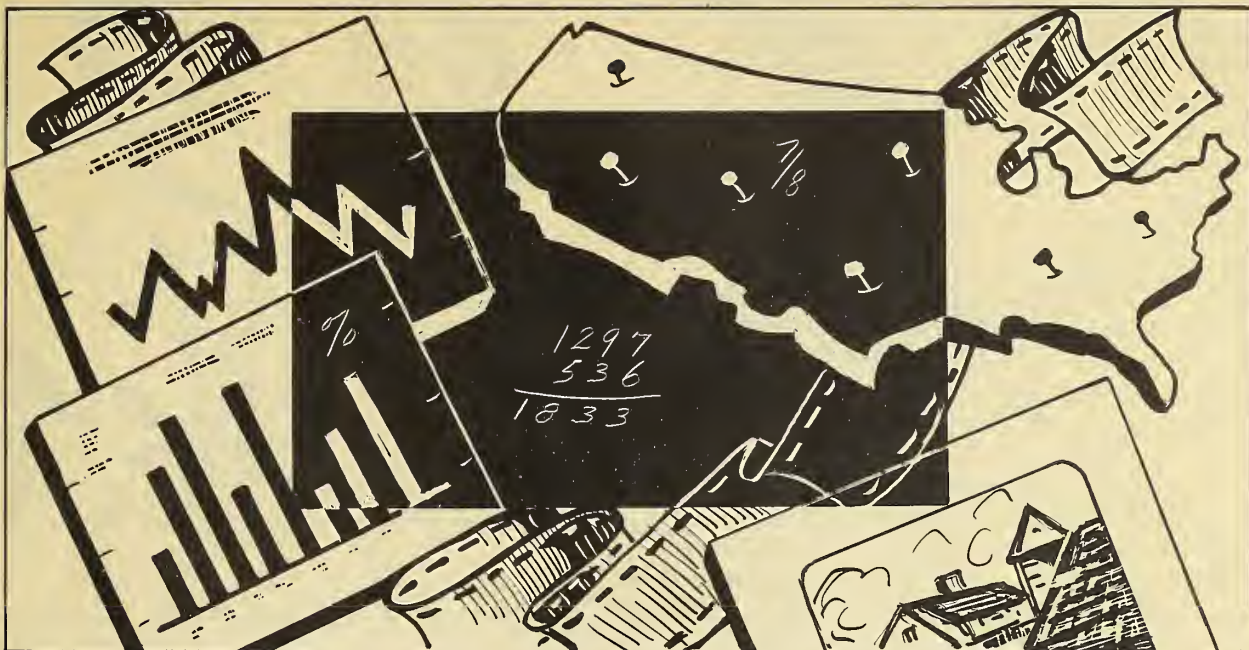
Bill Royhill -- terracing. Mention others.

Blythe Community -- drainage.

Osage Valley -- livestock through pasture development.

This body part might be compared to an automobile without starter or brakes. The starter and brakes will be installed later in the form of the Introduction and Conclusion.





C. VISUAL AIDS MAKE WORDS MORE MEANINGFUL. Let's look further into making the body of the talk more interesting and serviceable. Visual aids make words more meaningful. They add interest, understanding and leave a more lasting impression. Use visual aids without commotion or loss of time. In planning the body of the talk, the points at which visual aids are to be used are very important. Here are a few aid possibilities for the body of the talk:

A large county map hung high enough and in a location for all to see.

A few enlarged pictures of practices on farms that have been improved.

A blackboard - for jotting down numbers, or making a rough outline map of county.

A large wall chart outlining practices - may be roughly lettered but all letters should be at least  $\frac{5}{8}$ " in height.

35mm slides with slide projector - only when pictures are available that relate directly to your objective.

Specimens or models - small bundle of a new hay crop, soil profiles, etc.

As with talking visual aids can be overdone. Most talks need one or two basic aids such as a map or an outline chart of major points. Select only those visual aids which you need and will use.

Now that you have prepared the main body of your talk -- you are ready to build up the beginning.

D. CONSTRUCT BEGINNING. There are few moments that compare with the possibilities of the beginning moments between a speaker and his audience. The situation is in the speaker's favor. The audience WANTS an informative and interesting talk.

You know how to greet a friend when you see him on business. You give him your attention. Your facial expressions, actions, and voice indicate you are glad to see him. Your eyes meet in friendly and sincere fashion as you say, "Hello, John."

Next, you probably discuss briefly things you have in common, the dry spell, Japanese beetles, or his main interest--his dairy herd. These two stages bring you together. He knows you have come to him for more than just greeting him. So you make a clear introductory statement of your business. It is not complete as to detail just yet, but it gives him your purpose and gets his attention. It arouses his interest. That is, it does if you have the situation straight. He has a large corn crop and you have an extra hay rake - you would like to arrange a trade.



Your speech beginning is as easy as that. With a definite objective in mind, your beginning with the group can be just as natural as your meeting an individual.

This adds the "starter" to the speech - its object is to bring your audience and you together, stimulate their interest, and develop an understanding of your business for the day.

Outline notes such as this should be written:

Introduction to Talk - "The Agricultural Program in Adair County."

Enjoy visiting with people who show interest in civic and rural advancement.

Many of you have worked either directly or indirectly on parts of this program - farm owners, handle materials, etc.

Many knew programs during depression, recovery, and war. As in the past - program farmer-planned and farmer-operated.

My job now is to point out how the program is designed to meet the farm needs and for the general betterment of our community.



E. CONCLUSION. Someone has said that in the introduction you tell them what you are going to tell them; in the body of the talk you tell them; and in the conclusion, you tell them what you have told them. The remembrance of ideas is increased by satisfactory repetition.

Repetition of the same ideas said in the same words, however, can become boring. Used in the right degree, however, repetition is one of the most effective methods in speaking. You will have to be the judge of the extent of repetition in each talk. The conclusion should be thorough, but brief. Your conclusion must encompass the entire talk and restate the central theme.

Now let's install and adjust the brakes. Glance over your introductory notes and the notes you have made on the body of your speech. Try to get the feel of making the talk - how you can end it successfully. You started with a central theme or purpose in your introduction. In the body outline you broadened your materials or ideas to develop the central theme. The job is to pull the threads together into the conclusion.

Again we might compare the conclusion to taking leave of an individual. "That's good, I'll be over Tuesday and bring the rake, and pick up the corn."

Make notes for your conclusion. Here is a typical outline for a conclusion:

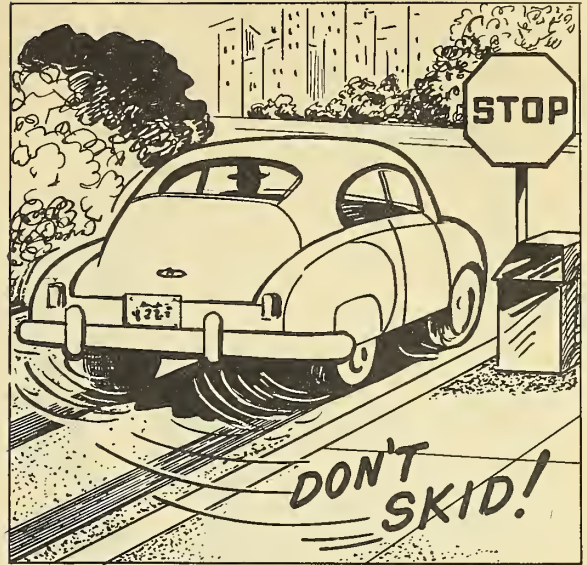
Total number of farmers in program.

Farmers' attitudes as a result of these achievements.

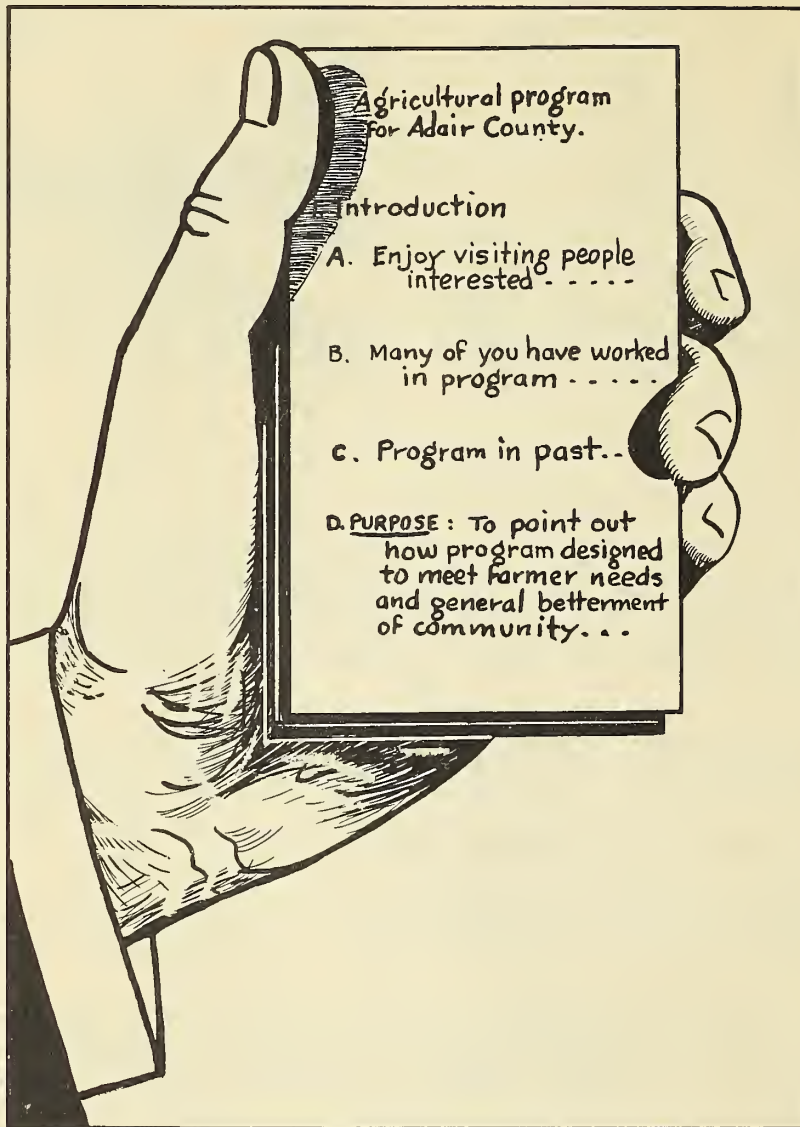
The county committee believes that the program is a sound approach in utilizing the Federal money, the farmers' money, labor, materials, and soils, towards a permanent and profitable agriculture.

This attained - every consumer, business and professional man will be benefited - show how.

If you want further information - any committeeman - the county office - other agencies.



F. REWRITE OUTLINE NOTES. Take the notes you have been making and group them on 3 x 5 inch cards or paper. These notes are only sign posts - but are very important to most speakers.



Altogether, you may have as many as five cards. Such notes glanced at occasionally are not objectionable - not nearly as objectionable as off-the-cuff rambling. Leave room on the first card for introductory ideas that might occur to you at the meeting.

### STEP III. PRACTICE

Good speeches do not happen by accident. They are prepared, and preparation includes some practice. There are several ways of getting this practice. We will mention a few. If you haven't already used these suggestions, you may not like them at first. Those who do have the nerve to practice are well repaid.

In your practice, use your own words, and be natural. If you attempt to use your written expressions or another fellow's vocabulary, they will likely trip you. Consider your notes as a framework - your personality, your words, and your manners are the vital materials in completing the structure.



A. Hold your cards in your hand and go over in your mind the things you might say.

B. Stand on your feet in front of a mirror and "say" your speech to that guy (time yourself).

C. While your wife is getting dinner - say it to her. If she does not have time to listen, get one of the children. If you can interest them, you've done something.

D. Ask yourself what's wrong - correct it.



Here is a word of encouragement -- if it now sounds not worse than "half bad", chances are very bright for you to make an excellent talk. You may now put these cards in your pocket with confidence that you will make a good talk.



## DELIVERY OF SPEECH

### STEP IV. EFFECTIVE DELIVERY

It is assumed that you will read these suggestions at time of preparation and that they will be included in your practice.

A. INTRODUCTORY PHASE. You are next. The chairman is about to introduce you. At this stage it's normal for your breathing to be shallow, and for your heart to be running at a fast rate. You may feel tense all over. If you do not have at least a touch of these symptoms, your talk will likely be flat and matter-of-fact. The adrenal glands of the normal individual under this situation, charge up the nervous system for the job ahead. Even so, you need to loosen the tension sufficiently to use this built-up power effectively. To do this breathe deeply and relax your stomach muscles at the same time.



You are on your feet. The chairman has completed his introduction. If you are several steps from the speaker's position - this moment will help to relax you and clear your head.

Pause just a few seconds. No, do not apologize. Remember, you are greeting a friend - that is, a number of them. Thank the chairman - speak to the group - look at them - stand naturally, not bent over a table. No "Ladies and Gentlemen" statement -- just start talking. Not too fast but friendly, in a conversational way. Hold your cards in your hand. Have them ready for use if you need them.

You may have noticed that so far there has been no mention of jokes. If the situation is just right and the joke exactly fits, it may be safe to use the joke. More points are lost than clarified by improperly used jokes. So don't try to stretch a joke to make a point. Humorous situations, however, may be used most effectively.

By the time you get down to the point of stating your central theme or purpose, you may be trembling a little - some perspiration and the like. Simply do not let it worry you - it's natural. Shift your feet - move your arms - get busy visiting with the people. State your purpose clearly. You may want to repeat it in another way. Be sure you get it across.

B. BODY OF SPEECH. Subject Matter Precaution. Be sure that you make the major points relate to the purpose.



Voice Precaution. Your voice may tire and become tiresome to the listeners. Try lowering your chin and talk from deep down in the chest cavity. The use of visual aids will give you an opportunity to change your rate of speaking as well as the tone.

General Impression. Continue to give your entire energies to the job at hand. Be enthusiastic and sincere in what you are doing, and the group will reflect your attitude back to you. Shift position occasionally to talk to those on the right, left, and the rear, as well as those directly in front. Avoid distractions such as rubbing chin, removing glasses, or pulling nose. Speak to the people not at them; not too loudly but loudly enough to be heard.

Don't Ramble Precaution. Use your cards if you forget the next point. If, however, you do get off some, don't apologize - simply move back to the point missed, weave it in, and move on. No one but you will know. When you need to use your cards, hold them up in the best position for you to see them. It's all right for the audience to see the cards. Cards indicate preparation and thought.

C. CONCLUSION. Do not say, "Now in Conclusion" - You are stating in a few sentences what these things mean to everyone. What they can do - what farmers are doing and will do. You are agreeing on a proposition, your central theme. Say it in a friendly and sincere manner. Make your last sentence serve as a friendly "so-long." Move unhurriedly and with poise away from the speaker's position to your seat. If the program is arranged for you to answer questions from members of the group, do not make another speech - make your answers complete but brief. Be courteous and have the courage to say "I don't know," when such is the case.





## RESULTS

### STEP V. EVALUATE SPEECH



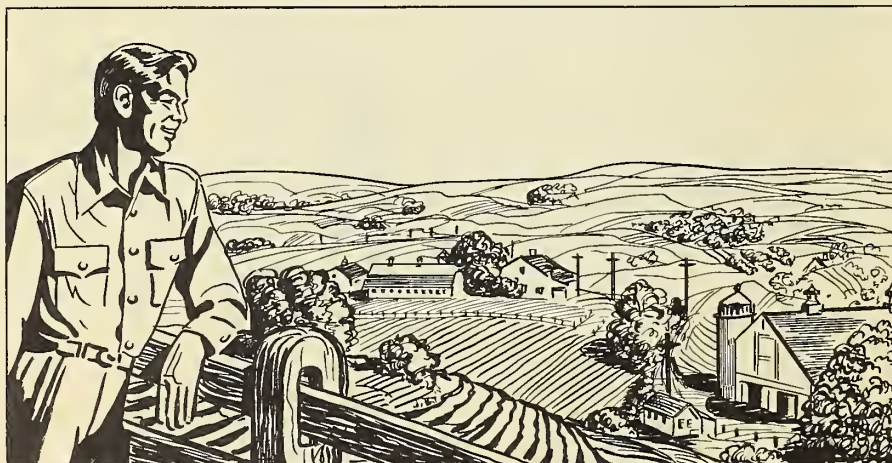
"Will it help me do my job?"

Experience is the best teacher. Analyze your experience.

Did the group attain the objective I set for them? Why or why not? Judging from group interest, what part of the talk was most effective? How well did I handle the visual aids? What fell flat, and why?

The fact that your group may not throng around in jovial congratulations or eager appreciation does not in any way denote failure. Incidents over the weeks in terms of actions or other evidence are more important.

Above all, do not let down on the next opportunity. Keep alert and go through the same painstaking preparation each time. Program progress and personal satisfaction will be reward enough.



## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Know the programs of your agency and their relationships to other National, State, and local programs.
2. Know your community - its agricultural history, its farming enterprises, its industries and business.
3. Know national trends in agriculture - respect the opinions of others.
4. Be alert to possibilities for speech improvement.
  - a. Use USDA library references.
  - b. Use reports on operational problems at staff conferences as a medium for speech improvement and at the same time improve staff meetings.
5. Look on speaking as a skill which you use in your regular work - for the scientist, the engineer, the agronomist, the economist, and others to make your knowledge more usable in the Department of Agriculture.

